

# FAST BLAST



**OUR MISSION: "Make education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians."**

**DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL**, *Executive Director, California Student Aid Commission*

*February 13, 2009*

## **A message from Executive Director, Diana Fuentes-Michel**

In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order S-16, that became effective February 1, 2009 and until further notice, the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) will be closed the first and third Fridays of every month. We recognize that this may be an inconvenience for our customers given the approaching March 2 deadline. Although our offices will be closed, WebGrants will still be available to schools. We advise you to continue to use this valuable tool during this period. We also recommend that you advise your students to use WebGrants for Students, where we will continue to provide important updates.

The production schedule will also be impacted by the furlough days. On furlough weeks only, weekly payment processing jobs and all other updates will be run Thursday nights. On non-furlough weeks, the jobs will continue to run on the current schedule.

For more information, [click here](#) to view the 2009 Commission and Furlough Calendar.

## **Cal Grant and Chafee grant payments**

### **Cal Grants**

The Commission and the State Controller's Office worked cooperatively to ensure the spring advance funding for Cal Grants was disseminated before Feb 1, 2009. The funding, \$148.9 million, represents 85 percent of prior year accruals paid to institutions in the 2007 spring semester. Due to the State's eroding revenues, additional payments may be delayed an additional 30-days. Please keep in mind that projected payment outcomes are subject to change.

### **Chafee**

For the winter quarter and the spring semester, the Commission recently paid 2,889 Chafee grants totaling more than \$6.4 million. As with Cal Grants, future

Chafee grant payments are also subject to a 30-day hold at the Controller's office.

A Special Alert will be sent to institutions when new information about the Cal Grant and Chafee grant payments become available to us.

## **Call Center hours extended**

In an effort to assist as many students as possible, the Commission is pleased to inform you that we are extending our Student Support Services Branch (Call Center) hours from Tuesday, February 17 to Monday, March 2, 2009. With the exception of Friday, February 20, 2009, the Call Center's hours will be from 8:00 a.m. - 4:55 p.m.

We request your assistance in helping us get the word out to students and thank you in advance for your help with this outreach effort.

## **College Cost Estimates**

The 2009-10 Cal Grant College Cost Estimate information for the Cal Grant program will be due on February 17, 2009. College cost information is used to determine the financial need and award amounts for Cal Grant applicants.

## **Implementation of Real-Time transaction processing**

The Commission's Real-Time Database Advisory Committee has been working on modifications to WebGrants to allow real-time processing of Cal Grant transactions. With input from stakeholders, the Commission will be upgrading the Cal Grant payment roster to facilitate real-time processing of grant roster payment transactions. We anticipate this enhancement will be of immediate value to institutions.

Prior to implementation of the real-time processing enhancement, the Commission will release an Operations Memo to announce the changes.

If you have any questions, please contact the Commission's School Support Services staff at (888) 294-0153 or [schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov).

**More than 500 Cash for College financial aid workshops are scheduled to take place in communities across California up until the March 2 Cal Grant deadline. To direct students to a workshop in your community, visit [www.calgrants.org/workshops](http://www.calgrants.org/workshops). High school seniors who attend a workshop and apply for a Cal Grant by the March 2 deadline could cash in on an extra \$1,000 scholarship provided by College Access Foundation of California.**

### Successful partnerships help get the word out about the March 2 Cal Grant application filing deadline

In the past few weeks, the Commission has had the opportunity to partner with many California Legislative members who have provided their support of the Cal Grant application process. We wish to thank Senator Cox and Assembly Members Niello, Jones and Huber and Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell for participating in various Commission media events.

In addition, the Legislature provided letter and brochure templates to its members to inform constituents about the availability of Cal Grants and Cash for College workshops.

Other partners in this effort included high school representatives, students and volunteers, California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP), Cash for College regional coordinators, I Can Afford College representatives, and California financial aid administrators.

Media partners included KCRA, Channel 3, Sacramento and multi market Univision and Telemundo outlets.

We thank all of our supporters for their assistance relaying our financial aid message to California's students: ***Apply for financial aid before the March 2 deadline and maximize your financial aid potential.***

### Nominations for the Marmaduke Award for high school counselors

The Commission will be accepting nominations for the annual Arthur Marmaduke High School Counselor Award in March.

The Marmaduke Award recognizes one high school counselor each year who has demonstrated superior skills, dedication and commitment in helping students gain access to postsecondary education through the Commission's grant, scholarship and loan assumption programs. Nominees should exhibit excellent skills in counseling and motivating students to pursue an education after high school. They should also be strong advocates of the financial aid tools that are available to support students' educational goals, including Cal Grants and scholarships. Nominees should demonstrate notable dedication to the student populations they serve. Moreover, their performance should result in an exceptional number of students receiving financial aid as a direct result of their counseling efforts.

The Marmaduke Award was established by the Commission in 1985 in honor of the late Arthur Marmaduke for his dedication and commitment in helping students gain access to postsecondary education through the Commission's programs. Arthur Marmaduke served as the Executive Director of the Commission for 25 years.

*The Commission remains dedicated to keeping you apprised of any new information that may affect our programs. Please forward your ideas and comments to [Fastblast@csac.ca.gov](mailto:Fastblast@csac.ca.gov)*

